

Interagency Wildfire Management Team
Meeting Notes
May 21, 2003

Gene Darling (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) estimates that 80 percent of the ponderosa pine in Water Canyon below the DAHRT Facility have died during the current drought.

Doug Tucker (Los Alamos County Fire Department) reported that the Los Alamos County is thinning forests on the east side of Range Road from Diamond Drive to the cemetery. Doug feels that the canyons around Los Alamos pose the greatest threat from wildfire hazards. Also, the County has discussed the possibility of closing trails because of the increasing fire hazards. Finally, Doug distributed a news release from State Farm Insurance Company announcing that they are "giving customers in wildfire-prone areas about two years to clean brush and trees from around their homes or risk losing coverage."

George Geissler (Davey Resource Group) stated that the tree mortality in the Los Alamos region can result in reduced water loss through transpiration. Junipers transpire approximately 17 gallons of water per day and ponderosa pines transpire 14 to 15 gallons of water per day.

Randy Balice (Ecology Group, LANL) recently attended the 2003 Drought Summit in Flagstaff, Arizona. Major conclusions at the summit included 1) droughts have occurred many times in the Southwest during the past 1,000 years, 2) the intensity of the current drought is not decreasing, 3) the current drought is exacerbated by pressures from increasing human populations, and 4) past droughts have had significant effects on biodiversity and economic stability in the Southwest.

Todd Haagenstad (Ecology Group, LANL) reported that a Wildland Fire Management Plan for LANL is in the early stages of development.

Dean Clark (Bandelier National Monument) noted that live fuel moistures in ponderosa pines have increased from 70 percent to above 80 percent.

Manny L'Esperance (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) announced that a wildland fire safety exercise will be conducted in June. Manny also noted that the fire roads that have been rehabilitated look good.

The Climate Assessment for the Southwest project (CLIMAS), located at the University of Arizona's Institute for the Study of Planet Earth, reports through its May 2003 information packet that fire danger is above average across southeastern Arizona and southern New Mexico, especially below 8,500 feet. Several National Forests have declared campfire restrictions. For more information, see <http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/forecasts.html>

Manny L'Esperance (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) reported through the LANL Fire Danger Estimate notification system that the fire danger levels at LANL are moderate. Recent rains in the Los Alamos region have increased the 1-hour and 10-hour fuel moistures to 9 percent and 10 percent, respectively. The 1000-hour fuel moistures range from 6 percent to 10 percent.

The next IWMT meeting will be at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, June 6, at TA-21, Building 210 in the RRES-ECO Conference Room (142). The IWMT meets every other week and these meetings are open to the public. Contact

Randy Balice (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270) for further information, or to get on the distribution list for these meeting notes.